

**NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR A NEW ERA:  
ENHANCING THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARMY'S  
STABILIZATION ROLE IN AFRICA**

**Deane-Peter Baker**

**June 2009**

Visit our website for other free publication  
downloads

<http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/>

[To rate this publication click here.](#)

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. Authors of Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) publications enjoy full academic freedom, provided they do not disclose classified information, jeopardize operations security, or misrepresent official U.S. policy. Such academic freedom empowers them to offer new and sometimes controversial perspectives in the interest of furthering debate on key issues. This report is cleared for public release; distribution is unlimited.

\*\*\*\*\*

This publication is subject to Title 17, United States Code, Sections 101 and 105. It is in the public domain and may not be copyrighted.

Report Documentation Page			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188		
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE <b>JUN 2009</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2009 to 00-00-2009</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>New Partnerships for a New Era: Enhancing the South African Army's Stabilization Role in Africa</b>			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S)			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA, 17013-5244</b>			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>53</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

\*\*\*\*\*

The author would like to thank the South Africa Army Vision 2020 team and the leadership of the South Africa Army for their willingness to be open to discussion and critique. The author would also like to thank Steve Metz, Steve Kidder, Kevin Smith, Joe Charsagua, Frank Hoffman, Adam Cobb, John Bonin, and Conrad Crane for insights that helped shape this monograph. Responsibility for the final product, particularly its flaws, remains entirely that of the author.

\*\*\*\*\*

Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Ave, Carlisle, PA 17013-5244.

\*\*\*\*\*

All Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) publications are available on the SSI homepage for electronic dissemination. Hard copies of this report also may be ordered from our homepage. SSI's homepage address is: *www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil*.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Strategic Studies Institute publishes a monthly e-mail newsletter to update the national security community on the research of our analysts, recent and forthcoming publications, and upcoming conferences sponsored by the Institute. Each newsletter also provides a strategic commentary by one of our research analysts. If you are interested in receiving this newsletter, please subscribe on our homepage at *www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/newsletter/*.

ISBN 1-58487-396-5

## FOREWORD

Often overshadowed by areas elsewhere in the world with high-profile wars, Africa continues to be a continent blighted by slow-burning but deadly conflicts. In recent years Africans have taken significant strides towards creating African solutions to these African problems, through, for example, the creation of the African Union and the African Standby Force. The path to peace and stability in Africa is a long one, but these are important first steps.

One of the principal African nations in this effort has been South Africa. That nation's armed forces have been heavily committed to African Union and United Nations operations around the continent. In this monograph, Professor Deane-Peter Baker seeks to outline helpful ways to enable the South African Army of the future to successfully confront the challenging tasks that lie ahead.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to offer this monograph as a contribution to Army, Joint, and Interagency thinking about how best to partner with and assist one of Africa's lead nations in the ongoing global quest for peace and stability.



DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
Director  
Strategic Studies Institute

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DEANE-PETER BAKER is Associate Professor of Ethics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, as well as Director of the university's Strategic Studies Group. In the winter of 2007-08, he was a Visiting Fellow at the Triangle Institute for Security Studies at Duke University. From January through March 2009, he was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College. Professor Baker's wide-ranging research addresses topics in philosophy, ethics (particularly military ethics), and security studies. Forthcoming publications include an edited volume on counterinsurgency and the South African Army and a sole-authored book on the ethics, political philosophy, and civil-military implications of the outsourcing of force to private contractors. Professor Baker holds a B.A. (Hons), a master's degree in philosophy, and a master's degree in political science from the University of Natal/KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa), and was awarded his Ph.D. by Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.

## SUMMARY

Since emerging from the mire of its apartheid past, South Africa has become a key player in Sub-Saharan Africa. The very significant challenge of creating a truly national military during a period in which South Africa has also wrestled with tough internal socio-economic problems has left the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in a weakened state. Despite this, in recent years the branches of the SANDF, particularly the South African (SA) Army, have made a considerable contribution to efforts to bring peace and stability to the African continent. A critical step in building a capable and confident future SA Army has been the commencement of the Army's Vision 2020 forward planning process. Recent political changes in both the United States and South Africa have opened up a new window of opportunity for developing a productive partnership between the two nations. This monograph outlines ways in which the United States can contribute to the SA Army's Vision 2020 program so as to help optimize South Africa's potential contribution to the emergence of a peaceful and stable Africa.

The primary product of the Vision 2020 program to date is the recently document titled *The Future SA Army Strategy*, informally referred to as "Strategy 2020." Strategy 2020 outlines two central objectives for the future SA Army:

- To deter potential adversaries and, where that fails, to successfully engage and defeat actual adversaries that threaten South Africa's territorial integrity, sovereignty, or vital interests; and,
- To contribute to peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and stability operations in the continent at large.

An ancillary function for the SA Army will be to provide support to the nation's population in response to threats to human security that are beyond the ability of the nation's other security forces to address, and to contribute to socio-economic development in South Africa.

In response to its dual mandate, Strategy 2020 outlines a future SA Army force structure composed of a mechanized division (optimized for conventional warfare, manned primarily by reservists, and kept at a sub-optimum level of readiness); a motorized division (primarily composed of active component infantry brigades and prepared for routine expeditionary deployments on peace and stability missions); and a Special Operations Brigade (designed to undertake quick-reaction and early-entry operations).

While there is much to be lauded in Strategy 2020, the dual-mandate force structure it proposes is problematic for many reasons. The central argument of this monograph is that the proposed force structure will not maximize South Africa's ability to contribute to expeditionary stability and peacekeeping opportunities, nor will it leave South Africa militarily prepared for a significant conventional threat to her sovereignty, territorial integrity, or vital interests. The United States and her North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies should therefore seek opportunities to enable the SA Army to design a force structure agile and flexible enough to meet both conventional threats (to its territorial integrity) and nonconventional threats (to extraterritorial stability).

In addition, South Africa should be encouraged to see the nation's army not simply as a *contributor* of forces to multinational peace and stability operations,

but (given South Africa's relative economic and technological strength) also as a critical *enabler* of such operations. The SA Army's structure and capabilities should be designed accordingly, with particular attention to its capabilities in logistics; intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR); command and control; and other essential force-support functions.

This monograph also proposes that the SA Army be formally connected, through the supply of trained personnel, to a newly created system of border guard and other specialized South African Police Service units. This mission offers a means by which the SA Army can significantly contribute to the task of addressing one of South Africa's biggest challenges—crime and illegal immigration—without taking the politically unpalatable step of direct involvement in internal security operations.

The means by which the United States can contribute to optimizing the design and development of the future SA Army include:

- Developing closer ties between the United States Marine Corps and the SA Army. There are significant commonalities in the envisaged future missions and capabilities of both forces; therefore, potentially valuable synergies should emerge from closer connections between them.
- Sharing important lessons learned from U.S. employment of reserve forces. The picture of the reserve component of the SA Army painted in Strategy 2020 is a very traditional one: citizen soldiers with conventional soldiering skills standing ready to defend the nation against external attack, and occasionally being called up to assist the active component when the



operational tempo exceeds what the actives can cope with. It is questionable, however, whether employing the reserve component as primarily a strategic backup, i.e., one with a secondary relief role, is the best approach.

- Establishing SA Army and SA Police Services links with U.S. Border Patrol and National Guard units that have recently been deployed to parts of the U.S.-Mexico border, with a view to sharing experience and ideas for the possible creation of dedicated, SA Army-trained border patrol units for the SA Police.
- Offering support to the SA Army's nascent reserve training system, which seeks to recruit and train university students as junior leaders in the future SA Army. The considerable experience gained through the operation of the U.S. Army's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) should be shared with the SA Army. Moreover, expanding the scope of Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA), International Military Education and Training (IMET), and/or similar programs to fund scholarships tied to the SA Army's reserve training system will have a significant long-term beneficial impact on the quality of the SA Army's future leadership. Other contributions to the SANDF's broader education and training infrastructure (such as assisting with the establishment of distance education programs) should also be considered.
- Assisting with the initiation and funding of a South Africa-based defense research center to help offset a dearth of study, data-gathering, and other investigative resources available to the SA

Army and other SANDF structures as they seek to develop high-quality strategy, organizations, and doctrine.



# **NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR A NEW ERA: ENHANCING THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARMY'S STABILIZATION ROLE IN AFRICA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Diplomatic relations between the United States and South Africa have been somewhat frosty for quite some time now. Though military relations have continued via such vital mechanisms as the State Partnership Program (SPP), which connects the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) with the New York National Guard, South Africa has largely kept the United States at arms length. There are many reasons for this, but the unpopularity of the Iraq invasion and a perception that the Bush administration was inflexible in its relations with Israel over the Palestinian question, have been key factors in recent times. Additionally, the perception (despite U.S. assurances to the contrary) that the launch of the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) was an aggressive move, undertaken without genuine consultation with Africans and primarily aimed at countering Chinese influence on the continent, has worsened matters. On the other side, relations in the other direction have been strained by a U.S. perception that South Africa has failed to adequately engage with the crisis across her border in neighboring Zimbabwe.

The inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States unquestionably represents an enormous opportunity to overcome some of the distrust of the past and build stronger and more constructive ties between the United States and South Africa. President Obama's international popularity is arguably unprecedented in the modern era, with his African-American heritage gaining him a warm place

in the hearts of most Africans. In a press statement released on the occasion of President Obama's election victory, then South African President Kgalema Motlanthe expressed the hope that many Africans see in President Obama's presidency: "Your election to this high office of the American people carries with it hope for millions of your [countrymen] as [well as] for millions of people, particularly of . . . African descent, both in the continent of Africa as well as those in the Diaspora." Motlanthe also hinted at the prospects for improved collaboration between the two nations: "South Africa looks forward to working with you, Your Excellency, in the consolidation of the strategic bilateral political, economic, trade, and social relations between our two governments and peoples."<sup>1</sup>

There can be little doubt that South Africa is a key potential partner in U.S. efforts to contribute to peace, development, and stability on the African continent. In Sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa is unrivalled in its relative economic and industrial strength, having been a key player in a range of important continental and regional initiatives such as the formation of the African Union (AU), including its Peace and Security Council, and the South African Development Community (SADC) Mutual Defence Pact. Despite sometimes being over-impressed by its regional power status, South Africa remains a very influential, and generally positive, player in African politics. During her nomination hearing, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton singled out South Africa, along with Ghana, as key African democracies that should be supported by the United States. In pursuit of the critical goal of building a world "with more partners and fewer adversaries,"<sup>2</sup> developing a sturdy partnership with South Africa must unquestionably rank high on the U.S. agenda.

The opening of this new window of opportunity for a new partnership between South Africa and the United States has come at a vital moment in South Africa's history. Under former President Thabo Mbeki, South Africa sought to play a salient leadership role in Africa. With President Mbeki's resignation at the end of September 2008, however, South Africa's foreign relations entered a period of uncertainty. President Motlanthe sought to maintain the status quo in most regards, but many believe this was simply because of his status as caretaker president until the general elections of this year—2009. His successor, Jacob Zuma, gains much of his support from the political left within the ruling African National Congress. He can be expected to face considerable pressure to focus more on domestic issues than President Mbeki is perceived to have done. In this environment, it is critical that the United States take well-considered steps to encourage South Africa to continue to play its important role in stabilizing Africa, while at the same time enabling South Africa's leaders to better ensure the safety, security, and prosperity of the nation's own citizens. This monograph delineates one broad area in which the United States can do this—through providing support to the SANDF, and the South African (SA) Army in particular, during a critical period in its history.

### **Challenges Faced by the South African National Defence Force.**

South Africa's transition to democracy from the apartheid regime created a significant problem, among others, of what to do about the future of South Africa's military forces. The solution was the creation of the SANDF—a new national military force into which numerous elements were integrated: (1) the apartheid-

era South African Defence Force (SADF); (2) the armed wings of the liberation movements (including the African National Congress's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe); (3) Inkatha Freedom Party Self-Defence Units; and (4) the so-called "statutory forces" (the armed forces of the former Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei self-governing "homelands" that were set up by the apartheid government in an attempt to deflect criticism away from its refusal to extend political suffrage to black South Africans). The creation of the SANDF was, in political terms, a considerable success. While there were inevitable tensions among former enemies, the process was achieved relatively smoothly, and significant follow-on hostilities were averted.

In pure military terms, however, the SANDF has been less of a success since its creation in 1994. Perhaps inevitably, the impressive warfighting capability that the SANDF inherited from its primary predecessor, the apartheid-era SADF, has been eroded by such factors as the higher priority accorded the 10-year integration process; the slow pace of the effort to downsize the SANDF workforce; severe budgetary constraints in the face of pressing social problems; a high rate of HIV/AIDS and other health problems;<sup>3</sup> and the increasing obsolescence of military equipment, despite some big-ticket purchases for the SA Air Force and SA Navy.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the SANDF has faced an unexpectedly high operational tempo. Since being welcomed back into the international fold and shedding its pariah status, South Africa has played a leading role in addressing conflict and defusing tensions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sao Tome e Principe, and has contributed additional forces to AU and United Nations (UN) missions in Burundi, the DRC, Comoros, Darfur, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Liberia.

## **The State of the SA Army.**

Of the four branches of the SANDF, it is the SA Army that has suffered the most as a result of these challenges.<sup>5</sup> The Army employs by far the largest workforce of any branch of the SANDF, has been most engaged in peace support operations, and was not included in the Strategic Defence Procurement Package announced in September 1999, which focused on new equipment for the Navy – MEKO class frigates, Type 209 submarines (SSK), and Super Lynx maritime helicopters; and the Air Force – Augusta A109 light utility helicopters, BAe Hawk LIFT fighter trainers, and multi-role SAAB Gripen fighter aircraft.<sup>6</sup> The Army has also been hampered by a force structure design that came into effect in 2001. That structure was implemented in accordance with the recommendations of consulting firm Deloitte and Touche, which was contracted to draw up a plan to make the SA Army more economically efficient. The Deloitte and Touche plan called for the separation of army combat forces into independent servicing elements, such as one each for armor, infantry, artillery, and engineers. These would in turn chop appropriate units to a tactical commander as needed.

As a result, the combined-arms forces necessary to actually conduct operations had to be assembled each time on an ad hoc basis, drawing units together from the various branch reservoirs. At the time of the restructuring, this was not considered by those in authority to be a significant problem because of a widespread perception that the presumed “peace dividend” following the 1994 transition to democracy would entail little need for the state to make use of its military forces. It was also expected that the new structure would generate considerable cost savings,



an important consideration at a time when the priority for the emergent government was the considerable domestic needs of South Africa's citizens, not pursuit of muscular foreign policy agendas.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, given the politically tenuous circumstances under which the SANDF was formed, it cannot have escaped the new force's planners that the lack of large standing integrated units served as an impediment to any possible military coup.

In the face of these health, funding, structural, equipment, and other challenges, it is a testament to the commitment and professionalism of the many fine officers and enlisted soldiers of the SA Army that they have done as well as they have in the many operations they have been involved in over the past decade. But the fact is that the SA Army is now at a low ebb. Morale is poor, vital equipment is often unavailable or broken, regular units are difficult to field because of the high incidence of health problems, and the reserves — once a critical part of the old SADF's order of battle — are so underfunded as to be almost completely nonfunctional.

But there are at least two bright spots on this seemingly dark horizon. One is the introduction of the Military Skills Development System (MSDS), a 2-year short-service program that is bringing new recruits into the Army and rejuvenating the active component (though not yet the reserves). One measure of the success of this program is the current high demand from employers, particularly the South African Police Service and South African Correctional Services, for personnel who have completed the MSDS program.

It is the second bright spot, however, that will be the primary focus of this monograph. In response to the acute problems faced by the Army and an awareness of a lack of strategic direction, in September 2004

the Chief of the SA Army, Lieutenant General Solly Shoke, set in motion an investigatory process aimed at ascertaining the optimum shape and capabilities of the SA Army. This process, the Vision 2020 program, has already resulted in positive benefits for the Army. One major step has been the commencement of a process of restructuring that will, when completed, undo many of the negative consequences of the Deloitte and Touche structure.<sup>8</sup> It also seems likely that the Vision 2020 program had some impact on the decision to purchase new Infantry Fighting Vehicles for the Army.<sup>9</sup>

Vision 2020 and its expected primary product, Strategy 2020, are likely to be critical determinants of the future military contribution South Africa is able to make to stability operations on the African continent. Vision 2020 is an ongoing process, one in which the SA Army has shown an unprecedented willingness to consider outside perspectives.<sup>10</sup> A key opportunity now rides on the back of the hoped-for thaw in relations between the United States and South Africa, that is, for the SA Army to optimize its future structure and capabilities. It goes without saying that a well-equipped and highly capable SA Army, pursuing an agenda of conflict management and stabilization in Africa, could provide an enormous boost to a stable and prosperous global future.

The next section outlines the central tenets of the proposed Strategy 2020 as it currently stands. There are a number of problematic assumptions built into the draft version of Strategy 2020, and those will also be treated subsequently. The final section of this monograph proposes ways in which the U.S. military might contribute to the development of Strategy 2020 in order to aid the SA Army in achieving an optimal mix of force structure and capabilities.

## SA ARMY STRATEGY 2020

January 2009 saw the publication of a document that has been in preparation for several years, *The Future SA Army Strategy* (Strategy 2020). This document is the product of a strategy formulation process implemented by a team of SA Army analysts (the Vision 2020 Program team) in response to a tasking order by the Chief of the SA Army, Lieutenant General Shoke. The purpose of the document is defined as follows: “*Strategy 2020 has been developed as a foundation for an evolving set of strategies that will enable the SA Army to successfully meet the developing challenges and threats that South Africa and Africa may have to face.*”<sup>11</sup>

Those threats and challenges are recognized as being multi-faceted and diverse, with Strategy 2020 therefore seeking to define a future SA Army that will be capable of full-spectrum operations, ranging from conventional warfighting through counterinsurgency, peace support, and stability operations, to humanitarian operations. Though it is envisioned that most future operational deployments will be as part of a larger multinational and multiagency effort, it is also stressed that the SA Army must retain the ability to operate on its own, supported where appropriate by the other branches of the SANDF and South Africa’s other security services. Achieving an expeditionary-capable force is another key emphasis, as is the capability to sustain extended campaigns where necessary.

### Overview.

Strategy 2020 comprises a bundle of three interrelated and complementary strategies, namely:

1. A force employment strategy (or, in the terminology of the document, a “how-to-fight” strategy) that

seeks to define the Army's approach to becoming capable of operating along the full spectrum of operations, and which also seeks to ascertain the force structure necessary to conduct such operations.

2. A force preparation strategy that outlines proposed approaches to doctrine management; leadership development; soldier education, training, and development (ETD); and force training.

3. A force support strategy that outlines proposed management and administrative systems for the Army.

These three Command strategies—Land, Training, and Support—will be implemented by the three main formations of the future SA Army, namely, Land Command, Training Command, and Support Command, respectively, all falling under Army Headquarters. Together, it is envisaged these three strategies will produce a future SA Army capable of successfully providing combat-ready ground forces able to achieve the key objectives of the force. The objectives prescribed by Vision 2020 can be summarized under three main headings: national defense, stability operations, and support to civil society.

*National Defense.* The first set of objectives is defined by the SA Army's constitutionally mandated role as the primary guarantor of the nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Deterrence of potential adversaries is obviously a critical objective, of course. Where that fails, the objective shifts to successful engagement and defeat of adversaries while also protecting the homeland rear area. This objective is not limited to deterring or defeating those who threaten South African territory, but also extends to the protection of vital interests that fall outside of the nation's borders (such as the Cahora Bassa hydroelectric complex in Mozambique and the Highlands Water system in Lesotho). Counterterrorism and actions against major organized crime syndicates

also fall into this category, though these operations will be undertaken in conjunction with (and likely under the direction of) other government departments, particularly the South African Police Service.

*Stability Operations.* Strategy 2020's authors foresee South African involvement in peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and stability operations in Africa as continuing to be a key defining role for the SA Army. Operations beyond the continent are also considered to be a possibility, though not very likely. Possible uses of the SA Army in this context could include deliberate intervention as part of a multinational force (or, in cases of extreme emergency, unilaterally) to stabilize a deteriorating situation, enforce a peace deal, or assume a more traditional peacekeeping role. A rapid-response capability is considered to be a critical prerequisite for addressing crises that emerge with little warning. There is also a commitment to an interesting but as yet underexplored concept, that of "developmental peacekeeping." Here the SA Army's Engineer Maintenance Regiment (envisaged by Strategy 2020) is seen to have an important role. The ability to work closely with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society is also stressed. Humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters and the like is also considered to be an inherent part of stability operations.

*Support to Civil Society.* While ensuring South Africa's sovereignty and territorial integrity and contributing to regional and continental stability are the primary missions envisaged for the future SA Army, a secondary role of providing support to the nation's population is also considered important. Such support is largely described in Strategy 2020 as having two parts. First, the SA Army is to be prepared to come to the aid of citizens in response to threats beyond the

ability of the state's other arms to address—natural disasters, strikes, and large-scale riots, for example. Second, the SA Army is to contribute to socio-economic development in South Africa. Provision of such support is conceived as primarily an indirect mission (in connection with, for example, educational and training programs provided to citizens via the short-service Military Skills Development System and the ROTC-like Reserve Training System [RTS]). The Engineer Maintenance Regiment would play an important role here, training young South Africans in various technical and functional fields and then releasing them into civilian society after a period of military service. It is noteworthy that there is no mention of a role in addressing crime despite South Africa's very high violent crime rate, nor is there any mention of a role in border security despite South Africa's notoriously porous borders and a massive ongoing influx of illegal immigrants and refugees.

Analysis of these key objectives, together with an assessment of the expected future threat environment, has led Vision 2020 planners to propose that the SA Army should maintain the ability to deploy a combat group (of undisclosed but less than brigade size) anywhere in Africa within 5 days followed, if necessary, by a brigade-strength force within 20 days. If circumstances demand, it is envisaged that the SA Army will have the ability to undertake one large-scale operation or, alternatively, one medium-scale and two smaller operations simultaneously. This requirement remains vague, however, given the failure to define large-scale and medium-scale operations.

## **Land Command Force Structure.**

It is clear to the authors of Strategy 2020 that the current operational force structure requires a significant change if it is to be able to achieve these objectives. The force structure must be designed, it is argued, to address a dual mandate, namely, the maintenance of a conventional capability primarily aimed at deterrence, on one hand, and the development of an expeditionary capability primarily encompassing “operations other than war,” on the other. An additional perceived need is for a rapid-reaction capability to be deployed in support of either of these primary mandates.

The dual mandate presents the SA Army’s strategists with the challenge of designing a force structure that will adequately address both mandates. While it is recognized that the likelihood of South Africa or one of her allies becoming embroiled in a conventional interstate war is low, this low probability is somewhat counterbalanced by the potentially catastrophic consequences of being unprepared for this kind of conflict should it in fact occur. On the other hand, peacekeeping and stabilization operations are likely to predominate in the future, and these operations are seen by Strategy 2020’s planners as requiring capabilities quite different from those associated with conventional warfighting.

Strategy 2020 thus argues that it is impossible to prioritize between the two mandates. It therefore proposes a force structure containing elements designed to address both these needs, as well as an additional rapid-response capability. Accordingly, the future SA Army is envisaged as containing a mechanized division with primary responsibility for deterrence and conventional defense of South Africa’s

borders, sovereignty, and interests; a motorized division optimized for expeditionary deployments on peace and stability missions; and a special operations brigade designed to enable quick-reaction and early-entry operations. Supporting these three main components of the future force will be an engineer maintenance regiment, with primary responsibility for maintaining SA Army installations and infrastructure and contributing to developmental peacekeeping.

*The Mechanized Division.* Conceived as the SA Army's heavy force, the mechanized division is to be composed of an armored brigade, a mechanized brigade, and a motorized brigade, plus divisional troops. The division will be maintained in a relatively low readiness posture on the assumption that a sudden threat is unlikely, and that there will be "between 2 and 5 years' warning" of any impending conventional military threat. The mechanized division will be largely manned by reservists, augmented by a core of cadred active regular units with a sufficient fill to be tactically functional. This precaution will assure that a limited conventional warfighting capability is available on relatively short notice should such be required in support of AU or UN peace-enforcement operations, or as part of collective self-defense arrangements. The low readiness posture of the mechanized division is considered by Strategy 2020's authors to provide at lower cost a credible deterrent against longer-term conventional threats, while at the same time presenting a nonaggressive defensive posture to neighbors. Some of the mechanized division's forces will exist on paper only, with the expectation that units will be filled up from other parts of the Army and/or recruitment as a crisis emerges. A similar approach is taken to equipment, with the active component cadre and partial fill being fully equipped, while the reserve



units will have sufficient equipment available to them for training purposes, the concept being that the remaining necessary prime mission equipment will be provided by local industry or purchased elsewhere as an emergent crisis appears.

Because of the primary conventional defense/deterrence role of the mechanized division, it is anticipated that its prime mission equipment will be calibrated for operations in the first and second layers of countries that lie on South Africa's borders. Judicious employment of cost-effective advanced technologies is considered an important force multiplier. The operational concept for this division sees it as the primary tool for deliberate and preventive self-defense. Because of its relatively small size, considerable emphasis is placed on maneuver and psychological shock as force multipliers. Acting in concert with the other components of the SA Army and the rest of the SANDF, the mechanized division will participate in high-intensity and high-tempo operations that engage the enemy's forward battle forces as well as joining the deep fight.

*The Motorized Division.* The motorized division, the SA Army's medium force, is to be composed of six motorized brigades plus divisional troops. This division will shoulder the bulk of the burden with respect to peace support operations and the remaining operations other than war, and will also be the first to respond to crises in the homeland that are beyond the capabilities of other government departments. Since the motorized division is expected to have a significantly higher operational tempo than the mechanized division, it will be primarily (though not exclusively) manned by active component troops. The motorized brigades will be fully equipped. Where necessary, equipment deployed in the theater will be maintained in place and passed to

other brigades as they rotate in. Units of the motorized division will be organized and equipped so as to be network-enabled, rapidly deployable, “optimized for close combat in small all-arms teams,” able to operate independently and semi-autonomously for protracted periods of time, and adept at swarming tactics. Because of South Africa’s geographic location and commitment to providing a SADC standby brigade (SADCBRIG) to the African Union Standby Force, equipment will be optimized for easy deployment to, and operations in, the SADC region.

*Special Operations Brigade.* The SA Army’s rapid-response capability will be provided by the special operations brigade, which is conceived as the SA Army’s light force. In addition to brigade-level supporting units, the special operations brigade will consist of two parachute battalion groups, two air-landed battalion groups, and two sea-landed battalion groups. These battalion group pairs will each be manned by active component and reserve component troops, respectively. As with the motorized division, equipment will be optimized for operations in the SADC region. Exceptional training and special capabilities (such as night-fighting capabilities), together with network-enabled systems and advanced ISTAR assets, are regarded as compensators for limited intrinsic firepower and mobility.

*Engineer Maintenance Regiment.* The final component of the new SA Army structure is the engineer maintenance regiment. As mentioned, this unit will have primary responsibility for providing construction and engineer maintenance support to the Army, as well as providing units to be deployed on developmental peacekeeping missions. The regiment will be made up of 12 engineer squadrons, each based in a different region of South Africa, as well as an engineer training squadron and a composite maintenance company.

An unwritten but important role for the engineer maintenance regiment is to provide a means for shifting combat-unfit troops into an environment where they can be retrained, rereadied, and redeployed in ways that will both contribute to the SA Army's mission and equip unit enlisted members for civilian careers following their army duty. Given the significant health and fitness problems facing today's SA Army, this is a very important consideration.

*Operational Forces.* Under Strategy 2020, the basic independent operational unit is the battalion group, though smaller units may be deployed as part of composite multinational forces. Battalion groups will be structured and equipped according to their primary mission (as defined by the division/brigade to which they belong), and will be designed to operate independently, autonomously, and agilely, even (or especially) in the face of a numerically superior foe. Brigade and battalion headquarters will be tailored for deployability. Though there is the much discussed dual-mission bifurcation built into the proposed force structure, Strategy 2020 does allow for forces to be tailored for specific missions by attaching and detaching elements drawn from other units. Repeated mention is made of the importance of SA Army operational forces having the capability to operate in joint, interagency, and multinational environments, though little specific detail is provided on how that will be achieved. Multirole training is also emphasized as a means for plugging capability gaps through the substitution of units in roles different from their primary one.

## **Logistics and Personnel.**

Logistical support capability is a key feature of the force design under Strategy 2020. Units will be de-

signed to operate without external logistical support for at least 3 days in high-tempo operations, or for 7 days while undertaking low-intensity operations. Although details are again sketchy, emphasis is placed on facilitating expeditionary operations, coordinating host nation support, coordinating civilian contractors, and developing the flexibility and agility to cope with challenging operations in regions with little infrastructure. Another important consideration is interoperability with partner nations (particularly those nations also committed to the SADC BRIG), it being recognized that the SA Army should be able, where needed, to provide the logistical wherewithal for joint and multinational operations. Modularity, low-maintenance equipment, and networked capabilities are considered key enablers.

As already made clear, Strategy 2020 depicts the future SA Army as being manned by a mix of active component and reserve component personnel. Both will be represented in all the main structures of the SA Army, though active component personnel will predominate in the motorized division, while reserve component personnel will predominate in the mechanized division. The 2-year short-service Military Skills Development System, which will usually encompass approximately 40 percent of the active component personnel strength and most of the active component soldiers and junior leaders, will man both reserve and regular units and structures. The remainder of the active component strength is formed through the Core Service System (middle-rank leaders up to the ranks of colonel for officers and staff sergeant for enlisted) and Senior Career System (general officers, other senior leaders, and some specialists).

Strategy 2020 places a high premium on education and leadership development in the future SA Army. The strategy for achieving this goal is multi-faceted.

Military-specific training is to be supplemented with appropriate civilian education. Military education and training systems are envisaged as being network-enabled wherever possible, so as to ensure maximum access. An RTS, along the lines of the U.S. Army's ROTC system, will also be implemented to supplement the existing Military Academy in generating a ready supply of well-educated junior officers for the SA Army. Senior officers who are educated to postgraduate level will increasingly be the norm. This will be achieved through quality accredited strategic education programs provided by the military or through service-linked scholarships to civilian universities. Tours of duty with other services or allied militaries will be encouraged as part of the career development of senior officers.

## **PROBLEMS WITH SA ARMY STRATEGY 2020**

There is much to be lauded in Strategy 2020, which aims for an SA Army that would be a considerable improvement over the current force. There are, however, a number of problems with the analysis underpinning Strategy 2020, with the result that its potential may not be optimized. Specifically, several problematic assumptions have been made regarding both the strategic and operational levels.

### **Strategic Assumptions.**

As we have seen, a key feature of Strategy 2020 is the force structure, composed primarily of a mechanized division, a motorized division, and a special operations brigade. For a nation obsessed with soccer and rugby, it is perhaps surprising that Strategy 2020 has chosen a structure more in line with the U.S. National Football

League, opting for an “offense” (the motorized division), a “defense” (the mechanized division), and “special teams” (the special operations brigade). Strategically, this force structure rests on problematic assumptions about the SA Army’s role in deterring potential enemies who might seek to undermine South Africa’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, or vital interests, namely, that the deterrence-focused formation, the mechanized division, should be kept at a low readiness level because there is expected to be between 2 and 5 years’ warning of a significant threat. This planning horizon ignores the obvious point that international crises tend to erupt far more quickly than that. While it is not incorrect to assume that a significant conventional threat to South Africa is *unlikely*, it is questionable to assume that were such a threat to arise it would arise *slowly*. This becomes clearer when we consider how such threats might arise.

There are very few powers in the world with the military capability to unilaterally mount a successful full-scale invasion of another country, and none of them are geographically proximate to South Africa. This geographical reality is unlikely to change within the foreseeable future. As a result, in the unlikely event of a future conventional threat to South Africa arising, it will come either from a major power projecting force over a considerable distance, or from a coalition involving one or more of South Africa’s neighboring countries. The only major powers likely to have the ability to project sufficient force to threaten South Africa in the foreseeable future are the United States, (perhaps) China, and (even more unlikely) India. The likelihood of an invasion force coming from any of these nations must be considered to be close to nil, but even if that were not so, it seems highly unlikely that any of these countries would give South Africa 2 to 5

years in which to mobilize her conventional defenses for such an attack.

Recent history makes this obvious. The preliminary U.S. air and SOF-led attacks on Taliban forces in Afghanistan began less than a month after the events of September 11, 2001, and the first significant contingent of conventional ground troops were in place as of November 25. The Iraq invasion began on March 20, 2003, a little over 5 months after Congress authorized the use of U.S. armed forces for this purpose. It is safe to assume that any country with the capabilities to project a force representing a serious threat to South Africa could initiate preliminary action within a matter of weeks (airstrikes and SOF) and could commence ground operations within as short a period as 4 to 6 months. The SA Army deterrence force (the mechanized division) envisaged in Strategy 2020 offers no deterrence value at all in the face of a threat of this kind, as it simply could not mobilize in time to engage in combat operations at all. Likewise, a coalition force could be assembled in a neighboring country in a matter of months rather than years (the apartheid-era SADF's experience of facing a rapidly assembled Soviet-supported Cuban-Angolan coalition force in the mid-1970s should be evidence enough of this). It seems, then, that in the unlikely event of an emergent conventional threat to South Africa, it will more likely than not arise relatively quickly, thus rendering the SA Army's mechanized division largely irrelevant.

We should also recall Strategy 2020's objective of deterring threats to South Africa's vital interests beyond her borders. This kind of threat, though still unlikely, is far more likely than any threat of invasion or attack on South African soil. Consider, for example, a hypothetical future scenario in which South Africa has become highly dependent on revenues and oil



produced by a major refinery located in Angola, a South Atlantic country lying along the southwestern coast of Africa. Let us imagine that the refinery is co-owned by a South African international company and its Angolan counterpart, Sonangol. Imagine further that the Angolan government decides to seize control of the refinery, its outputs, and all the profits it generates. Imagine also that diplomatic efforts to reverse the seizure fail, and Angola, with support from its Chinese allies, mobilizes its military defenses up to a full war footing, preparing to resist any South African force entering Angolan territory. Once again it is clear that such a situation could arise very quickly, and, if the forces needed by South Africa to address this situation were between 2 and 5 years away from operational readiness, they would be of no value at all.

Perhaps the only circumstance that could arise in which the proposed structure would be of utility is when one or more neighboring countries decided to build up their own forces to the point that they were in a position to pose a conventional military threat to South Africa. Given the economics involved, unless the South African response to such a growing threat is dramatically mishandled, this scenario is highly unlikely to result in a catastrophic outcome for South Africa. The outcome of arms races and prolonged conflicts is almost always determined primarily by economic considerations, as attested to by the Cold War and the two World Wars. The combined gross domestic product (GDP) of the 10 countries occupying the first and second layers of countries contiguous to South Africa's borders (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) comes to a little more than half of South Africa's GDP.<sup>12</sup> This extreme disparity suggests that South Africa would have no difficulty in



addressing such a long-term threat should it emerge. While there would certainly be some utility in having plans on the shelf for expansion of the SA Army in the unlikely event of such circumstances, it hardly seems necessary or desirable for the current force structure to be specifically oriented towards such an uncertain threat.

Another practical problem relates to the proposed composition of the motorized division. As outlined above, the concept for manning the division calls for reservists, with regular troops maintaining only a small core capability. In all likelihood, it will be the active component units that would be called upon to contribute to peace and stability operations where necessary, with reserve units being deployed only as a last resort. Given the inevitable budgetary challenges that will continue to face the SA Army, it is hard to imagine that the reserve units of a division oriented towards a highly unlikely conventional threat will receive the resources necessary to maintain them at a realistic deterrent level, whatever the present paper commitments.<sup>13</sup>

As Michael Fitzsimmons rightly points out,

[A]n effective strategy must *prioritise*, not just enumerate, the various challenges facing the nation. And if risk management is meant to be an important tool for that prioritisation, both adverse consequences and *likelihoods* associated with various challenges must be considered explicitly.<sup>14</sup>

Even the brief analysis offered here serves to show the highly questionable nature of the proposed force structure outlined in Strategy 2020. It is unlikely to contribute anything at all towards achieving the objective of deterring potential conventional military threats to South Africa's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and

vital interests. On the contrary, the proposed structure seems more likely to lull South Africa's civilian and military leadership into a false sense of security, with the consequence that if such a threat *does* in fact arise, South Africa will likely have to face it with the forces it already has in a state of operational readiness. But these, according to Strategy 2020, are to be designed primarily as peacekeeping forces. That scenario would indeed be catastrophic.

### **Operational Assumptions.**

Strategy 2020's faulty strategic assumptions about the likely operational environment that the SA Army will face lead to less than optimum plans for the Army's proposed expeditionary forces.

The strategy's emphasis on agile and flexible forces able to adapt to a wide range of threats is laudable. However, once the attractive rhetoric is stripped away, it is questionable whether agility and flexibility are in fact built into the planned force structure. While Strategy 2020 provides few details about the precise make-up of the brigades and battalions comprising the motorized division, each brigade and battalion is designed to operate independently on a rotational basis so that all the brigades and battalion in the division will likely be similarly composed. It is fairly clear that, as the name suggests, the battalions that form the basic operational units of the motorized division will be composed of infantry transported in lightly armored vehicles, but who will ordinarily operate in dismounted mode. There are hints in Strategy 2020 suggesting that the brigades and perhaps the battalions will have at least some built-in fire-support and maneuver capabilities, though again details are absent. Still, it seems clear that Strategy 2020's authors have in mind a fairly traditional "boots on the ground" infantry force that, when

operating independently, is considered best suited for the peace and stability operations explicitly designated as the main thrust of future SA Army deployments.

The primary mechanism by which Strategy 2020 would address the complex threats it foresees is modularity, in which heavier units (presumably from the mechanized division) can be attached to or detached from battalion groups to accord with the undulating threat level. There are a number of problems with this approach. First, given that the equipment assigned to the mechanized division will not be designed with an expeditionary mission in mind, there is some doubt as to how well this “plug and play” approach will work in the real world, particularly given the significantly limited transportation infrastructure likely to be available. Second, given that the logistical support for heavy units seems to repose at division level, it is questionable whether adequate support can accompany detached heavy units, even when those units can be deployed.

Third, and most important, this approach assumes the luxury of having both adequate time and a clear intelligence picture. It assumes that the capabilities of opposing forces will be known well in advance of a deployment, or that changing threats will be recognized sufficiently in advance to allow additional conventional capabilities to somehow be mobilized, transported into the operational theater, and integrated with units already in the field. But given the fluid nature of today’s armed conflicts, these are ridiculously optimistic assumptions.

To express the point in a different way, a serious difficulty with the force structure outlined in Strategy 2020 is that it contains two types of forces, a separate type for each of the two distinct *types* of conflict envisaged, namely, traditional conventional operations

conducted against (presumably) state forces, on the one hand, and operations other than war undertaken in the face of nonstate opponents or environmental disasters, on the other. While there is an expectation that some ad hoc cross-switching arrangements will occasionally be necessary to address threats that lie between these two types of conflict, the basic assumption remains that the SA Army will face operations distinctly of one type or the other. But this is an untenable assumption.

In a thorough and thought-provoking study of trends in armed conflict, Frank Hoffman of the U.S. Marine Corps Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities finds that the future shows no hint of challengers offering pure, neatly categorizable methods of war, but rather a “convergence into multi-modal or hybrid wars.”<sup>15</sup> Specialized armies optimized for either conventional or nonconventional operations are an expensive and dangerous luxury. The SA Army must plan for opponents who refuse to abide by the rigid conventional/unconventional binary, who instead employ both traditional and nontraditional tactics and equipment in unexpected, brutal, and novel ways. The force structure called for by Strategy 2020 leaves South Africa’s expeditionary forces highly vulnerable to such opponents, thus limiting the SA Army’s potential utility in contributing to the future stability of the African continent.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

While the United States must not be seen as a heavy-handed interloper in shaping South Africa’s military policy, if the hoped-for thaw in relations materializes there will be fitting opportunities to help South Africa maximize the potential utility of her armed forces. The remainder of this monograph outlines several ways

in which this might be achieved. It is worth noting in advance that none of what is here proposed involves a U.S. contribution directly to the kinetic capabilities of the SANDF, an important consideration given the sensitivities involved.

### **Rethinking the Dual-Mandate Force Structure.**

As has already been made clear, the dual-mandate force structure proposed by Vision 2020 is problematic for a range of reasons. It will not maximize South Africa's ability to contribute to expeditionary stability and peacekeeping opportunities. Moreover, it will leave South Africa in a difficult position if a conventional threat to her sovereignty, territorial integrity, or vital interests does in fact arise. Where possible, the United States and her NATO allies should seek opportunities to nudge the SA Army leadership toward a force redesign that is agile and flexible enough to meet both conventional and nonconventional threats.

Interestingly, there are significant issues here that call to mind the current debate on U.S. Army force structure, with theorists such as Dr. Andrew Krepinevich of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments advocating a "dual surge" force structure conceptually similar to that set out in Strategy 2020,<sup>16</sup> while others, such as U.S. Army War College Professor John Bonin, argue for a flexible general purpose force, capability-diversified by a mandatory periodic training cycle consisting of rotating blocks of instruction, each keyed to a particular broad mission responsibility. Also, such forces would receive augmentation "packages" (specialized equipment and units) to address specific current threats.<sup>17</sup> While such a debate may well be relevant in the context of an Army as large and capable

as that of the United States, the relatively small size of the SA Army and its modest personnel, logistical, and training resources are strong reasons for avoiding the dual-surge approach.

One means by which to help the SA Army's planners appreciate the implications of different force structures is to make available to them the considerable simulation/wargaming capabilities of the U.S. Army and/or organizations such as RAND. This kind of capability can help planners enormously by testing implicit or explicit assumptions built into force planning. While South Africa is a relatively developed nation in the African context, these kinds of resources are largely unavailable to the planners and leadership of the SANDF. Making them available to the South African military could potentially result in more realistic and feasible force design solutions.

Where feasible, closer ties between the USMC and the SANDF should be developed. The Marine Corps' smaller size, expeditionary focus, and (relative to the U.S. Army) limited resources make for a philosophical mindset similar to that of the SANDF in relevant ways. The very interesting research being undertaken at such places as the Marine Corp Warfighting Lab should prove helpful to the SA Army's planners. Considering Strategy 2020's emphasis on "modular, highly-skilled forces operating in small, semi-autonomous all-arms teams that are networked," the potential synergies are fairly obvious.

### **The SA Army as an Enabler.**

While it is laudable that Strategy 2020 reveals a clear commitment by the SA Army to contributing to peace and stability operations in Africa, insufficient thought seems to have been given to the unique position South

Africa holds in sub-Saharan Africa. South Africa's relative economic, industrial, and technological strength puts it in a position to bring to multinational African peace and stability operations capabilities that are simply out of the reach of most other African countries. But there is little recognition of this advantage in Strategy 2020. Instead, the commitment seems to be expressed primarily in terms of ensuring the capability to field motorized brigades and battalions roughly equivalent to those that other African and developing world countries contribute to these operations.

The fact is, however, the number of troops the SA Army can field is always going to be limited, while demand is always likely to outstrip supply. Greater impact will be achieved if the SA Army develops specialized capabilities that are less manpower-intensive but which can be key enablers for a large multinational force. In some respects, the SANDF is already playing this role (for example, in deploying a specialized aviation support unit on behalf of the Mission of the United Nations Organization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [MONUC] in the DRC), but what is needed is a deliberate strategy for realizing the potential impact of contributing force-enabler assets to AU and UN operations.

Logistics is one obvious area in which this enabling capability can be applied (there is some understated recognition of this in Strategy 2020). Another is in providing key ISTAR capabilities, such as (for example) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Command and control capabilities are also critical assets that the SA Army could bring to the table. Imagine the advantages, for example, if the SA Army were structured such that the "nervous system" (i.e., the chain of command and their communications) of its brigades or even battalions could be "plugged in" as easily to allied multinational

forces as to regular or reserve SA Army troops. While these sorts of capabilities could be made available by the United States or other non-African forces, the involvement of non-African (and particularly Western) nations in African peace and stability operations is often politically problematic, as we have seen particularly in Sudan. It would be particularly valuable for the AU to have such capabilities available from one or more of its own member nations.

The U.S. Army has been thinking about its role as an enabler for some time now, and is beginning to make adjustments to its force structure accordingly. Sharing the thinking behind such adjustments with the SA Army could well have a valuable influence in helping to maximize the SA Army's contribution to African stability in the future.

### **Developing Specialized Capabilities.**

Strategy 2020 makes no mention of developing the specialized capabilities that are increasingly important in contemporary stability operations. This may be simply because Strategy 2020 does not aim for that degree of grandularity. But reading between the lines, we gather that provision is made only for relatively traditional forces. Even the Special Operations Brigade seems to be composed entirely of traditional light infantry forces, albeit ones that will be trained and equipped as airborne, air-landed, or sea-landed units. There is no mention anywhere of military police, civil affairs, psyops, and other specialist units that are proving to be important force-enablers in Afghanistan and Iraq operations. If the SA Army is to be capable of successfully undertaking the operations it will likely face in the future, it must have such specialist capabilities. Again, where opportunities permit, the



United States and its NATO partners should seek to help the SA Army develop these key capabilities, both as enablers for other SA Army units as well as for multinational partners.

### **Rethinking the Role of the Reserves.**

The picture of the reserve component of the SA Army painted in Strategy 2020 is a very traditional one: citizen soldiers with conventional soldiering skills standing ready to defend the nation against external attack; or occasionally called up to assist the active component when the operational tempo exceeds what the active component can cope with. It is questionable, however, whether employing the reserve component primarily as a strategic reserve, with a secondary relief role, is the best approach. For one thing, as already mentioned, given the very low likelihood of South Africa facing a conventional threat to her sovereignty or territorial integrity, and given the reality of limited budgets, this approach is likely to result in a reserve component existing mostly on paper, with little actual capability. The withering of the current reserve component since the transition to democracy in 1994 offers strong testimony to the likelihood of this happening.

A further problem is that Strategy 2020 leaves the bulk of the Army's conventional capability in the hands of the reserve component, presuming that if a crisis arises, these reserves can be brought up to speed quickly enough to be operationally effective. Such complacency is misguided, however, given the high level of proficiency required to survive and thrive on today's conventional battlefields. A salient lesson of Operations DESERT STORM and COBRA II is that troop numbers are largely irrelevant if the troops concerned lack the necessary level of training. As Stephen Biddle

has shown, the key variable for success on the conventional battlefield has been essentially unchanged since World War I—how the force is employed, not numerical preponderance.<sup>18</sup> But developing and sustaining the skills and methods necessary to prevail on today's highly lethal conventional battlefields, what Biddle calls the "modern system," are not easy tasks. As Biddle points out, "Among the most serious drawbacks of the modern system is its tremendous complexity, and the high level of skill it therefore demands in soldiers and officers. Not all armies can provide such skills."<sup>19</sup> Even the most ardent reserve force supporter (a category that includes the author of this monograph) must doubt whether all the skills necessary to conduct modern system combat can be adequately nurtured and sustained in the reserves, particularly given the likelihood of budgetary and training neglect of these forces.

Strategy 2020 generally views the active component of the SA Army as providing the necessary rapid-response capability, with the reserve component swinging into action later, if required. But this concept is simplistic. For some missions, particularly those requiring nontraditional and specialized capabilities, reserve units can provide a quick-response capability equal to, or even better than, that provided by active component units (this is implicitly recognized by the inclusion of reserve battalions in the Special Operations Brigade as outlined in Strategy 2020). Given that long deployments are more problematic for reservists, it makes sense that they should be preferred for quick-response in-and-out operations where possible.

As in the armies of many developing countries, skilled personnel are in short supply in many sectors of the SA Army. This situation is unlikely to improve much in the foreseeable future (which may account, in

part, for the lack of focus on active specialized units in Strategy 2020). Here reserves can play a key role. Extra pay, a sense of patriotic duty, and a desire for adventure can serve as strong incentives for skilled personnel, who would otherwise not consider service in the military, to join the reserves. The potential value gained by judicious inclusion of such personnel in the SA Army's structures seems to have been missed in Strategy 2020.

Together, these considerations suggest that the SA Army should adopt a more integrated approach to the use of its reservists. One promising approach would be to adopt a force structure in which brigades consist of two or more active component battalions rounded out by a reserve component battalion, following a concept similar to that underpinning U.S. Army National Guard Maneuver Support Brigades. Such hybrid units would be the appropriate forces with which to address natural disasters and the like in the South African homeland.

The structure proposed in Strategy 2020 has the odd consequence of assigning responsibility for providing support to civil society in times of national emergency to the active component units that make up the motorized division. Under Strategy 2020, reserve units, though located among local communities and inherently having local knowledge, will be trained for conventional operations (but with limited equipment during peacetime), thereby rendering them of little value for homeland emergencies. This unconstructive inversion of the natural relationship between reserve units and local communities (contrast the U.S. National Guard system) should therefore be reconsidered. For all these reasons, greater attention to the potential utility of reservists in the future SA Army is demanded. The United States should take any appropriate opportunities available to assist in this regard.

## **Enhancing Internal Security.**

An outsider with some knowledge of the challenges facing South Africa today will find it strange that Strategy 2020 devotes fixed attention to a conventional military threat that is unlikely ever to materialize, while making no provision at all for the Army to contribute to South Africa's greatest security threat: crime and illegal immigration. As a leading expert on South Africa's crime problem has put it,

South Africa is still in for a rough ride over the next decade or more. . . . The major challenges for the internal security of South Africa remain crime and the risk factors of crime. In spite of positive indications that crime in general is on the decrease, it is still at exceptionally high levels. If the current rate in crime decreases can be maintained (specifically violent crime), it may still take another 15 years or more to reach internationally accepted levels.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, while South Africa is not currently facing a terrorist threat, it is known that the country is a transit point for terrorists,<sup>21</sup> and the country's porous borders represent a considerable challenge in this regard.

The reasons for the SA Army's absence from these agencies dealing with the challenges enumerated are, however, entirely understandable given South Africa's history. During the apartheid era, the SA Army was heavily involved in sometimes brutal internal security operations, and South Africa's political leaders are today understandably sensitive about armed soldiers once again undertaking "law and order" operations in local communities. A significant consequence of this sensitivity has been the disbandment of the SA Army's territorial reserve units, the Commandos. These units, direct descendants of the Boer Commandos that

achieved fame during the Anglo-Boer Wars, were historically tied to specific regions of South Africa, providing support to the South African Police Service. This support was particularly valuable in rural areas with limited police manpower, and Commandos also took much of the responsibility for securing South Africa's land borders.

While many have argued for the reestablishment of the Commandos, this step seems highly unlikely given the political sensitivities concerned. By analogy, it also seems unlikely that the SA Army will be given a significant direct role in addressing crime and/or border security. This alternative does not, however, exhaust the ways in which the SA Army could contribute to addressing this critical security threat. Much of the training necessary to make the future SA Army effective in peace and stability operations has considerable bearing in this regard. Indeed, the value of the capable and disciplined manpower generated by thorough military training is already being recognized in the high demand from the South African Police Services (SAPS) and other security services for graduates from the SA Army's 2-year short-service military skills development system (MSDS) (a similar relationship exists in the United States between the armed forces and the nation's policing forces, particularly the Border Patrol). While this symbiotic relationship will continue to reap rewards even as it stands, there is potentially much to be gained from a more formal and expanded relationship.

Conceptually, such a relationship would be based on forming specific border patrol units and other special units that fall under the authority of SAPS but are manned exclusively through the Army's MSDS program. Once appropriately trained, these units could be deployed to remote stretches of South Africa's borders, or in support of local SAPS units

on a surge basis, in accordance with a military-style rotation. A particular virtue of such units would be their ability to be deployed *as units*, making them very valuable civilian police (CIVPOL) assets for AU and UN peacekeeping and stability operations. Such an arrangement would have the significant benefit of giving the SA Army a formal means by which to contribute to South Africa's own security (thereby contributing to positive perceptions of the SA Army among politicians and the general public), without requiring it to commit uniformed soldiers themselves to internal security operations. Joint operations with these special units in future expeditionary peace support operations will also be significantly enhanced by such an arrangement. The recent U.S. experience of deploying National Guard units to parts of the U.S.-Mexico border, and the long-standing experience of the U.S. Border Patrol, would serve as a huge repository of useful data in helping such units to be optimally effective.

### **University Reserve Training System and Other Military Education.**

An understated yet potentially critical part of Strategy 2020 is the envisaged RTS. Broadly similar to the U.S. Army's ROTC system in concept, the RTS will recruit and train undergraduate university students for posts in both the regular and reserve components of the SA Army. Because undergraduate degree programs in South Africa are typically of 3 years' duration, students will receive basic military training during the vacation periods of their first year of study, advanced individual training in the second year, and initial leadership training in the third year. Given the importance of ensuring a high-quality cadre of leaders for the SA Army of the future, this program is argu-

ably one of the most important strategic initiatives of Strategy 2020. Currently, a career in the SA Army is not highly regarded among the “brightest and best” of South Africa’s youth. But, as shown by the U.S. experience, offering educational scholarships tied to military service can be a strong incentive in convincing capable young people to join the military.

This program should be vigorously supported by the United States. A considerable body of knowledge and expertise from the U.S. ROTC program could be made available to help the SA Army operationalize its RTS. Expanding the scope of the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) program, the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program, or similar programs so as to enable the funding of scholarships tied to RTS would have a beneficial long-term impact on the quality of the SA Army’s future leadership. In addition, given that such funding would be a dual investment in both the SA Army and education in South Africa, it is likely to be positively received by local stakeholders. Student exchanges between U.S. ROTC and South African RTS programs (perhaps via the State Partnership Program, which connects South Africa with New York State) would be an excellent way of building publicly palatable relations between the militaries of both nations, and would represent a very significant incentive for South African students to join RTS.

Other opportunities to support the SA Army’s commitment to developing a better (and more appropriately) educated force should also be sought. In a recent conference paper, a senior military educator within the SANDF has pointed to significant problems with the current education system, including a lack of suitably qualified and experienced academic staff, the absence of appropriately qualified faculty, and poorly conceived curricula.<sup>22</sup> Again, there is much experience



and significant resources within the U.S. Army community that could be applied to overcoming these obstacles. A particular opportunity lies in assisting the SA Army to develop a robust distance education platform and high-quality program offerings to go along with it. Such an initiative receives considerable support in Strategy 2020, but currently distance education and online teaching capabilities are poorly developed in the SA Army.<sup>23</sup>

### **Enhancing Research Capabilities.**

The authors of Strategy 2020 would doubtless be the first to acknowledge their formidable difficulties in developing a well-designed strategy in the near vacuum of relevant research expertise available. The SA Army does have its own in-house research capability in the Centre for Military Studies (CEMIS). CEMIS is, however, very small by most standards, and its researchers also generally carry a full lecture load at the South African Military Academy and elsewhere. The Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) offers some relevant research capability, but it is primarily focused on technology. Beyond that, and the small team of Vision 2020 project officers themselves, there is almost no defense-focused government research capability on which the SA Army can draw.

The situation in the broader South African context looks little better. In the higher education sector, there are only a small handful of academics whose research touches on issues of military relevance. Relevant university-based research centers, such as the Institute for Strategic Studies at the University of Pretoria (ISSUP) and the Centre for Defence and Security Management at the University of the Witwatersrand, all have only one or two full-time faculty members and are starved for funding. Academic courses and



programs that could be considered to fall into or touch the field of strategic studies are few and far between, with the consequence that very little expertise in this area is being generated by South Africa's academic sector.

There are, it must be said, a handful of think tanks that undertake research addressing the challenges of potential armed conflict in Africa. But these think tanks are generally small, tending to focus their research on broad issues of national and international security. An illustrative case is that of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the largest of these think tanks and one with a good international reputation and a growing presence throughout the African continent. The ISS was originally chartered in 1991 as the Institute for Defence Policy, and many of its earliest research products were indeed focused on issues relevant to the South African military. It was not long, however, before the Institute's name had changed to reflect a broader focus on what it now calls "human security."

Today, despite the Institute's impressive growth over the intervening years, it conducts very little research that is directly relevant to the development of military strategy and operational capability in Africa.<sup>24</sup> Like all the other think tanks of this kind in South Africa, the ISS focuses primarily on a broad swath of social and political research addressing such topics as gender and security, health and security, crime, HIV/AIDS, security sector reform, arms control, and the like. The simple fact is that the primary sources of funding for these think tanks are European countries (particularly Scandinavian countries) whose laudable desire to see human security improved in Africa simply does not extend to an interest in improving the military effectiveness of African armed forces.

Seen in this light, there is a considerable need for a focused and capable research center for assisting the SA Army and other SANDF structures to develop

high-quality strategy, organizations, and doctrine. Ideally, such a center should be established at one of South Africa's universities, thereby optimizing its potential to contribute to teaching programs that will ensure the growth of relevant expertise among the next generation of South African researchers. Rotating military fellowships for NATO and African officers at the center would add to the all-important practitioner input into the research. Given the severe shortage of relevant research capability on the African continent, the center would also be well placed to undertake research in support of other African military forces, including the African Union Standby Force.

### **Summary of Recommendations.**

Recent years have seen a growing determination among African nations to seek "African solutions for African problems." While the economic and other challenges facing most African states mean that the continent will continue to be reliant on outside help for a long time to come, it is desirable to seize every opportunity to enable Africans to find those African solutions. The SA Army has the potential to contribute very significantly to peace and stability operations on the continent. The recommendations outlined in this monograph, if implemented, will greatly enhance that potential. Particularly given Africa's history of exploitation and abuse by Western nations, Africans deserve the opportunity to take responsibility for peace and stability on the continent. From a practical perspective, a capable SA Army, proactively engaged in securing stability in Africa, will help reduce the demands on U.S., NATO, and other outside forces that would otherwise be called upon to respond. Such an outcome is devoutly to be wished by all, and a goal worth investing in.

Recommendations for Enhancing SA Army Strategy 2020	Possible U.S. Contribution
<i>Rethink the “Dual Mandate” Force Structure.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make simulation/wargaming capabilities available to SA Army Vision 2020 planners.</li> <li>• Develop closer ties between USMC and SANDF.</li> </ul>
<i>Conceptualize and design SA Army as a force enabler for multinational AU and UN operations.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share U.S. Army expertise in working with coalition partners.</li> <li>• Assist SA Army in developing specialized capabilities such as advanced logistics, ISTAR, military police, civil affairs, psyops, and human terrain system.</li> </ul>
<i>Rethink the role of the reserve component in the SA Army.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share U.S. military experience and thinking on the flexible and appropriate use of reserve forces.</li> </ul>
<i>Increase SA Army’s formal contribution to addressing South Africa’s internal security challenges (crime and border security).</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create SA Army links with, and share experience of, U.S. Border Patrol and Nat. Guard, to explore creation of SA Army-enabled Police-“owned” border patrol and specialist police units.</li> </ul>
<i>Operationalize Reserve Training System and higher-level officer education.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build links with U.S. Army ROTC.</li> <li>• Expand the scope of ACOTA, IMET or similar programs to enable the funding of scholarships tied to RTS.</li> <li>• Create RTS-ROTC exchange program.</li> <li>• Assist SA Army education system in equipping faculty and directing staff and designing curricula.</li> <li>• Support the creation of a robust distance learning platform for the SA Army.</li> </ul>
<i>Improve the quality of research undertaken in support of Vision 2020 and development of doctrine.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to the creation of a dedicated defense research center.</li> </ul>

## ENDNOTES

1. South African Department of Foreign Affairs Press Release, November 5, 2008, available from [www.dfa.gov.za/docs/2008/usa1105.html](http://www.dfa.gov.za/docs/2008/usa1105.html), accessed February 2, 2009.

2. Hillary Clinton, Nomination Hearing To Be Secretary of State, Statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC, January 13, 2009, available at [www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/01/115196.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/01/115196.htm), accessed February 2, 2009.

3. See Lindy Heineken, "Facing a Merciless Enemy: HIV/AIDS and the South African Armed Forces," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 29, 2003, pp. 281-300.

4. For a good account of the problems facing the SANDF, see Len le Roux and Henri Boshoff, "State of the Military," John Daniel, Roger Southall, and Jessica Lutchman, eds., *State of the Nation: South Africa, 2004-2005*, Pretoria, South Africa: HSRC Press, pp. 177-200.

5. The SANDF is unusual in having all of its medical capability resident in a separate branch of the military, the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS), that exists alongside the more traditional branches of the South African Army, South African Air Force, and South African Navy.

6. The controversial "arms deal" continued to blight the political career of ANC President Jacob Zuma, who has now become South Africa's President. See also South African Government Information Service Press Release, "Cabinet Decision on Strategic Defence Procurement," September 15, 1999, available at [www.info.gov.za/speeches/1999/9909161216p1001.htm](http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/1999/9909161216p1001.htm), accessed March 5, 2009.

7. Helmoed-Romer Heitman, "South African Army outlines restructure plan," *Janes Defense Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 38, September 19, 2007, p. 16.

8. *Ibid.*

9. "Denel & Patria Building South Africa's Next IFV," May 24, 2007, *Defense Industry Daily*, available at [www.defenseindustrydaily.com/denel-patria-building-south-africas-next-ifv-03317/](http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/denel-patria-building-south-africas-next-ifv-03317/), accessed on June 6, 2008.

10. The Vision 2020 program team consulted a wide range of government, NGO, and academic personnel in its planning process.

11. Republic of South Africa Department of Defence Publication, *The Future SA Army Strategy*, Version 1 - January 2009, section 2, page 9.

12. According to the CIA World Factbook's estimates for 2008, the 10 combined GDPs come to \$272,294,000, while South Africa's GDP is measured at \$506,100,000. See [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2001rank.html), accessed on February 9, 2009.

13. Even the well-resourced U.S. Army faced exactly this problem when it became necessary to draw on National Guard units to deploy to Iraq. After years of underfunding, these National Guard units presented a considerable challenge to the Army in bringing them to operational strength and capability. This was achieved only through a process of "cross-leveling," which built operational units by drawing personnel and equipment from across the entire National Guard.

14. Michael Fitzsimmons, "The Problem of Uncertainty in Strategic Planning," *Survival*, Vol. 48, No. 4, 2006, p. 138. Emphasis added.

15. Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, December 2007.

16. Andrew F. Krepinevich, *An Army at the Crossroads*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2008.

17. John Bonin, Professor of Concepts and Doctrine, U.S. Army War College, interview by author, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, February 10, 2009.

18. Stephen Biddle, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle*, Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2004.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

20. Johan Berger, "South Africa in 2020: An Internal Security Perspective," in Len le Roux, ed., *South African Army Vision 2020: Security Challenges Shaping the Future South African Army*, Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, p. 252.

21. As a result, dating from March 2009, South African passport holders will, for the first time in the country's history, require a visa to travel to the United Kingdom.

22. A. J. Esterhuyse, "Distance Education and E-Learning in the South African Military," draft version of paper presented at the Defence Academies and Colleges International e-Learning Conference on Network Centric Learning: Towards Authentic ePractices, March 25-27, 2009, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Despite this, a lack of other options has led the SA Army Vision 2020 program to initiate research collaboration with the ISS, which has thus far resulted in the publication of one edited volume (2007), edited by retired South African Air Force General Len le Roux, entitled *South African Army Vision 2020: Security Challenges Shaping the Future South African Army* (see n. 19) While there are unquestionably some interesting papers in the volume, it is largely made up of broad overviews of trends and issues already addressed elsewhere. It offers nothing resembling the in-depth and sustained analysis that would typically characterize an equivalent RAND publication, for example.